

Historic Houses

Summer on the South Shore includes at least one historical tour of the many fine buildings and houses in the area. Simple 17th century dwellings dating back to the Pilgrims, handsome

mansions of the 18th century and the dignified homes of the 1800's are open to the public during the summer time on a regular basis.

by Nina Belsan

There's something magical, almost mystical about things of the past. A house, an old barn, an attic filled with treasures from another time, are fascinating attractions that draw our attention and curiosity.

Walking through the rooms of a 17th century house, one can almost feel how its inhabitants lived and went about their daily chores. The brick fireplace looms large and substantial in the rustic kitchen where the colonial housewife worked for many long hours. Utensils she used to bake bread, preserve garden vegetables, wash clothes and spin flax into linen, seem energized from her constant use.

Candle molds appear ready for another batch of hot tallow to be in readiness for the dark, winter months ahead. In the neatly austere bedroom, handsome quilts, meticulously embroidered, lay spread across a rough-hewn bed. An old Bible, its pages yellow from a golden age, lies silent beside the bed.

Outside, a patch of ground where rosemary and thyme, tarragon and basil once grew, is reverently marked.

Nowhere can history better narrate the story of people than in the houses where they lived, worked and prayed.

We are fortunate to be able to investigate the magical, mystical things of the past by visiting the many historical houses available on the South Shore. The 17th and 18th century people who settled in towns such as Plymouth, Duxbury, Marshfield, Scituate, Cohasset and Hingham left their characteristic mark in the homes that are now part of our historical heritage.

The Jabez Howland House in Plymouth (1667), is the only house where members of the Pilgrim group are known to have lived. It contains a fine collection of 17th and 18th century furnishings. The Major John Bradford House in Kingston provides an unusual opportunity to glimpse first hand the day-by-day life of the early colonists as early crafts are demonstrated in the house that was built in 1674.

The Jacobs Farm (mid 18th century) in Norwell, is a fine example of farm property in the 1700's. The Richard Sparrow house built in 1640, is said to be the oldest house in Plymouth; the John Alden House in Plymouth was built in 1653 by the third son of Priscilla and John Adlen.

The Mann Farmhouse in Scituate has a 17th century foundation which was added to in the 18th century. It housed five generations of the Mann family and contains artifacts dating to the 1600's. The King Caesar House in Duxbury, 1809, is a classic example of Federal period architecture featuring rare scenic wallpapers imported from France.

John Alden House — 1653

105 Alden Street, Duxbury, Mass. Built by the third son of John and Priscilla Alden. The Alden family owned the property until the early 20th century when it was deeded to the Alden Kindred of America. Open June through Labor Day. 934-2788

King Caesar House — 1809

King Caesar Road (Powder Point), Duxbury, Mass. Classic example of Federal period architecture featuring rare scenic wall papers imported from France by ship builder Ezra Weston, known as King Caesar. Open late June through Labor Day. 934-2788

Major John Bradford House — 1674

Landing Road, Kingston, Mass. An unusual opportunity to glimpse at first hand the day-to-day life of the early colonists. Early crafts are demonstrated and the visitor is able to see how 17th and 18th century people stored their food, cooked their meals, wove their clothes and brought up their children. Open June 15 through Labor Day. 585-4652

Winslow House — 1699

Careswell Street, Marshfield, Mass. Good example of early New England architecture furnished with fine period pieces. Daniel Webster's law office is here as well as an old Marshfield coach. Open July 1 through Labor Day. 834-7329

Richard Sparrow House — 1640

42 Summer Street, Plymouth, Mass. Said to be the oldest house in Plymouth (1640). The Plymouth Pottery Guild operates on the premises and its members act as hostesses and display ceramics made there by hand and wheel. 746-4624. May through September

Jabez Howland House — 1667

Sandwich Street, Plymouth, Mass. Added on to in the 18th century, this is the only house where the members of the pilgrim group are known to have lived. The Howland house shows a fine collection of 17th and 18th century furnishings and is staffed by hostesses in costume. May through September. 746-7737

Harlow Old Fort House — 1667

119 Sandwich Street, Plymouth, Mass. Built with framing timbers from the original fort. A working 17th century household; demonstrations of weaving, candle-dipping, and spinning. Audience participation. May through September, 746-0012

Old Oaken Bucket Homestead — 1675

Old Oaken Bucket Rd., Scituate. Homestead and well made famous by Samuel Woodworth in his poem, "The Old Oaken Bucket." Original Homestead built in 1645. 545-0474.

Cudworth House and Barn

First Parish Rd., Scituate. Furnished in the Early American tradition. Displays huge cauldron forged by Mordecai Lincoln, an ancestor of President Lincoln. Features a 250 year loom still being used for weaving demonstrations. Open for tours on June 10, July 8, Aug. 11, and Sept. 9. 545-0474.

Mann Farm House — c. 1700

Green field Lane and Stockbridge Rd., Scituate. This building housed five generations of the Mann family. Contains artifacts and furnishings back to the 1600's. Schedule same as Cudworth House. 545-0474.

Jacob's Farmhouse — c. 1700

Main Street and Jacob's Lane, Norwell, Mass. near junction Routes 53 & 123. This is a fine example of farm property of the 1700's. Owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; museum overseen by the Norwell Historical Society. Open June-October, Tues. Thurs. & Sun. aft., 1-5 p.m. 659-2965

Gershom Bradford House - 1808

931 Tremont St., Duxbury. Built by Ezra Weston's wife, it was never out of the family until given to the Historical Society by Edward and Gershom Bradford. Contains the original library, pictures and furniture of a 19th century family. Open from June 15 to September 15, by appointment.

The Independence Gown Museum — 1850

South Main Street, Cohasset, Mass. Originally built as Cohasset's first Fire House. In 1912, it became the first Police Station. On display are gowns of the Victorian era. Open mid-June through September. 383-0773

Spooner House — 1749

27 North Street, Plymouth, Mass. Lived in by the same family for over 200 years. The house furnished entirely by Spooner heirlooms, shows the actual development of a Plymouth home. May through September. 746-0012

Antiquarian House — 1809

126 Water Street, Plymouth, Mass. Built by Major William Hammatt and occupied by Thomas Hedge in 1830. A fine example of a 19th century merchant's home, it features collections of furniture, dolls, china, toys and costumes from Plymouth households. May through September. 746-0012



Photo by Greg Derr



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